

# **From huntresses to superheroes: collating three reviews about *RWBY***

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# Introduction

This 30-page e-book consists of various chapters, bringing together my three posts, to-date, on RWBY. The first is a short micro-review of *RWBY* up to Volume 8, which was [published on October 28, 2021](#), when I was working for *The Geekiary* (I stopped working there in December 2022). The second is my review of the film [\*Justice League x RWBY: Super Heroes and Huntsmen, Part 1\*](#), originally published on April 30, 2023. Third is my spoiler-filled review of *RWBY*'s Volume 9, which was originally published [on April 26, 2023](#).

I did some spell-check and other revisions to ensure this text made sense, and to correct any errors that I made in the original text, which comes to over 8,300 words! Otherwise, the text is almost the same. Happy Reading!

- Burkely

## Chapter One: "RWBY": The Captivating YA Animated Series



*Yang, Penny, Weiss, and Blake at the end of Volume 8*

Last year, when looking for another animated series to watch, I came across *RWBY*, a young adult animation, and one of Rooster Teeth's flagship series. While I wasn't sure about it at first, as I watched all eight seasons, I became invested in the characters, especially the protagonists, and a fan of the show itself.

*RWBY* is the brainchild of the late Monty Oum. It is known for its captivating stories and a theme song, sung by Casey Lee Williams, which begins every episode, foreshadowing what happens in the season/volume. Although the series has the classic conflict of good vs. evil, there are well-developed characters with intricate storylines, elements of horror, and good character development. Some characters are even morally grey, like General James Ironwood or the Ace Ops. Other villains, such as Cinder Fall, don't want to strictly follow their leader.



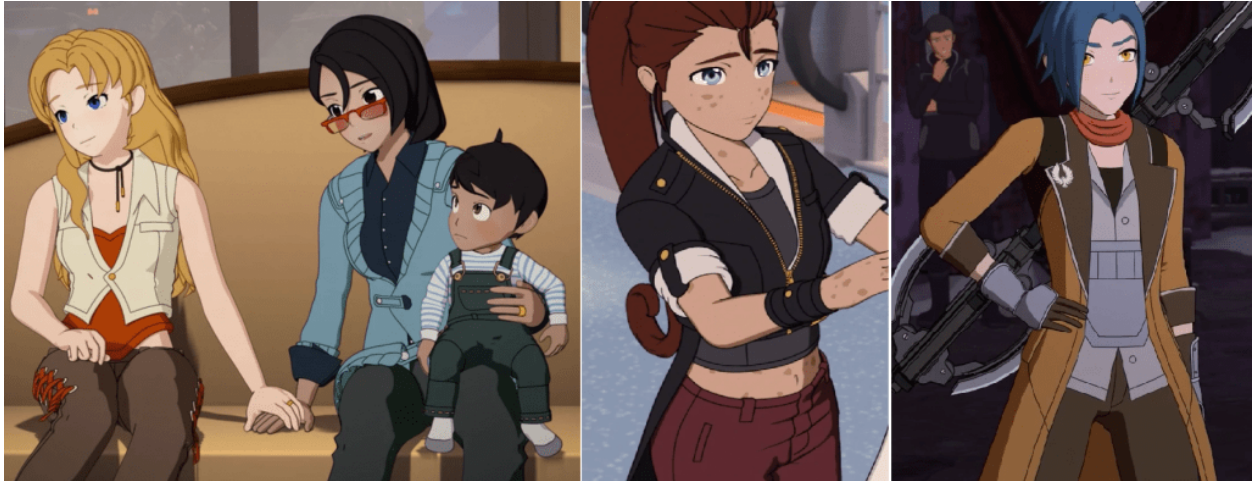
*Ruby in Volume 9 preview*

This anime-inspired series is named after the four main protagonists: Ruby Rose, Weiss Schnee, Blake Belladonna, and Yang Xiao Long. They stand against villains, such as Salem and her enforcers, like Cinder, Arthur Watts, Neopolitan, Tyrian Callows, Mercury Black, and the Grimm monsters. On the other hand, Ozma/Ozpin/Oscar Pine, Lie Ren, Nora Valkyrie, Qrow Branwen, Robyn Hill, and Jaune Arc, among others, help Ruby, Weiss, Blake, and Yang fight against the forces of evil.

The show is clearly mature as it features its share of blood and gore, and the death of some characters, with the antagonist, Salem, even engaging in human experimentation. On the other hand, this science fantasy/adventure/action series has a large focus on magic, and sci-fi elements like the cyborg girl, Penny Polendina, and scrolls which can receive and record messages. Each of the protagonists, like those on RWBY, have [a semblance](#) which derives from their aura, helping them battle against the Grimm and other villains, either including powers such as object manipulation, disorienting people, or super strength.

I don't want to give away too much of the plot, but I will say that the show features various supporting LGBTQ characters. In Volume 6, Saphron and Terra-Arc, a lesbian couple with a son named Adrian, as [confirmed by Lindsay Jones](#), the voice of Ruby, who the protagonists, and their friends, stay with on their journey to another kingdom. Additionally, in the Volume 5 episode "Alone Together," Ilia Amitola confessed her romantic feelings to Blake, and was later confirmed by show writer Miles Luna as a lesbian in [a Reddit AMA](#).

Most prominent is May Marigold, [a trans woman](#). Unlike other trans characters in animation, she is voiced by a trans female voice actress, Kdin Jenzen, and her character came out as trans in the Volume 8 episode "War," which she described as "[something so wildly powerful & meaningful](#)."



*LGBTQ characters in RWBY so far*

There is a lot about the series which is wonderful. There is a strong possibility of confirmed LGBTQ representation in the main cast, especially since the voice actress for Blake, Arryn Zech, confirmed her character as bisexual [in May 2020](#), and some even have argued that [the shipping](#) between Blake and Yang, known as Bumbleby, will come become canon in the show's next volume.

Even if this doesn't happen, the show is still powerful, from its music to the characters, the voice acting to the visuals, which have improved from the earliest seasons to the present-day. Although the fandom may be toxic at times, the show is unique in its colorful ship names, especially [the femslash ones](#), like Baked Alaska (Yang and Neopolitan), Blood Mint (Ruby and Emerald Sustrai), Freezerburn (Yang and Weiss), Ladybug (Ruby and Blake), or White Rose (Ruby and Weiss) to name a few.

So, if you haven't seen *RWBY* yet, whether on [VRV](#), [Crunchyroll](#), Amazon Prime (in some locations), YouTube Movies (for purchase/rent), or on the [RoosterTeeth website](#), now is the perfect time during the show's hiatus, before Volume 9 begins again sometime in 2022.

## Chapter Two: Justice League x RWBY: Super Heroes and Huntsmen, Part 1 Spoiler-Filled Review



*Justice League x RWBY: Super Heroes and Huntsmen, Part 1*, also known as *Justice League x RWBY*, *RWBY x Justice League*, or *JLxRWBY* for short, is an anime-inspired science fantasy action-adventure film, bringing together characters from the Justice League and those from the young adult animated series, *RWBY*. The latter is the flagship series of Rooster Teeth and began airing in 2013. It recently concluded [its ninth season](#). This film was written by Meghan Fitzmartin and directed by Kerry Shawcross.

This 83-minute film begins with Superman's unexpected arrival on Remnant, since he has no idea how he ended up there. In classic crossover fashion, seven of the classic Justice League characters, find themselves in Remnant as teenagers. Soon enough the huntresses of Remnant, specifically Ruby Rose, Blake Belladonna, Weiss Schnee, and Yang Xiao Long, and their friends, work with them to learn why their planet has changed and stop a Grimm monster from destroying all that exists. Ruby, Blake, Weiss, and Yang all have superpowers of sorts, known as semblances, each unique to themselves.

I was intrigued by this film as an avid fan of *RWBY* and occasional watcher of superhero series like *DC Super Hero Girls*, *Young Justice*, *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*, *Stretch Armstrong and the Flex Fighters*, [Moon Girl and Devil Dinosaur](#), *Birdgirl*, *Harley Quinn*,

[\*Hamster & Gretel\*](#), *Gotham Girls*, *Masters of the Universe: Revelation*, and *She-Ra: Princess of Power*. My interest in the classic superheroish magical girl anime *Sailor Moon* and the superheroish action series such as *Sym-Bionic Titan*, *My Life as a Teenage Robot*, and *OK K.O.! Let's Be Heroes*, further made me want to watch this film. My excitement remained even after learning that the film takes place in the first half of *RWBY*'s Volume 7.

There are differences from *RWBY*. For instance, *Justice League x RWBY: Super Heroes and Huntsmen, Part 1*, Ruby, Weiss, Blake, and Yang [wear](#) the outfits they donned in Vale, while Weiss can master her summoning of Glyphs, Nora wears the same outfit she wore in Beacon Academy, and the CCT tower at Beacon isn't destroyed, but is active. This is all because this film takes place in an alternate universe of sorts. That makes sense as it is a crossover film which has the same voice actors as the original *RWBY* series. One difference is Tiana Camacho, who voices Glynda in the *RWBY* original anime spinoff, *RWBY: Ice Queendom*.

It was nice to see Ruby, Weiss, Blake, Yang, Juane Arc, Pyrrha Nikos, and Lie Ren, the latter three part of [team JNR](#), interacting with members of the Justice League such as Superman, Batman, [Wonder Woman/Diana](#), Green Lantern/Jessica, Vixen, Cyborg, and The Flash. In the *RWBY* show proper Ozpin has been reincarnated as Oscar, other characters have either died, like Jacques Schnee (presumably in Volume 8), or haven't appeared in the show recently, like [Glynda](#) or Kali Belladonna. They return in this film.

Two other characters also appear: Adam Taurus and Sienna Khan. Adam Taurus was Blake's abusive boyfriend. Sienna Khan was killed by Adam to take control of the [White Fang](#), a peaceful organization originally aimed at improving conditions for the Faunus, a group of people with animal traits. Taurus aimed to change the latter organization into a violent terrorist organization which would overthrow human society and replace it with a Faunus-led one. In [\*Justice League x RWBY: Super Heroes and Huntsmen, Part 1\*](#), the latter two characters are only shown in [a flashback](#) when Blake remembers back to what actually happened during the series.

Apart from the voice actors for the *RWBY* characters, like [Arryn Zech](#), Blake Dunkelman, Lindsay Jones, Kara Eberle, Miles Luna, Samantha Ireland, and Neath Oum, those who voice the members of the Justice League (Chandler Riggs, Nat Wolff, Natalie Alyn Lind, David Errigo Jr., Jeannie Tirado, Tru Valentino, and Ozioma Akagha) are just as talented. Riggs (who voices Superman) is known for his role as Carl Grimes in *The Walking Dead*. Wolff, the voice of Batman, has been recognized for his music, and roles in films like *Paper Towns*, *The Fault in*

*Our Stars*, and *Ashby*. Lind, the voice of Wonder Woman in this film, is known for various television appearances including as Danielle Sullivan in *Big Sky*.

Errigo Jr., voice of The Flash, has previously done voice work in *Ridley Jones*, *The Casagrandes*, [Milo Murphy's Law](#), and *Dota: Dragon's Blood*. Tirado, voicing Green Lantern, has lent her voice to characters in dubs of *Fairy Tail Zero*, *KanColle: Kantai Collection*, and *Fire Emblem: Three Houses*. Tru Valentino, who voices Cyborg, is known for his voice work in *Madagascar: A Little Wild*, *Kung Fu Panda: The Dragon Knight*, and *Spidey and His Amazing Friends*.

I personally remember Valentino best for his role as Cuphead in the short-lived animated slapstick comedy, *The Cuphead Show*. Finally, Arkagha, who voices Vixen, is best known for her acting as Harper Omereoha in *Delilah*, and her voice acting as Shuri in *What If...?* and Bumblebee in *Teen Titans Go!*, to name a few roles.



Admittedly, I wasn't sure about *Justice League x RWBY: Super Heroes and Huntsmen, Part I* at first. Surely, the fight scenes and the character designs were good, but was uneasy about the plot, even when Superman got on the scene at the film's beginning. However, the film drew me in, beginning with Grimm glitching out of control when killed, all while they still retain their goal, as soulless creatures, to destroy humanity, which as Nora puts it at one point in the film.

The humor of the characters, especially of Yang, lightened the mood. For example, Yang [scoffs](#) at the idea she will call Superman by his name, causing him to admit they can call him "Clark" (as in Clark Kent) instead. It was also funny that when Batman/Bruce Wayne [fights people](#) in the Schnee mansion, a person is playing the piano during his fight.

The fracturing and scrambling of memory, causing the characters to be confused about what actually happened, is at the crux of the *Justice League x RWBY: Super Heroes and Huntsmen, Part 1*. It causes people, such as Ozpin, to appear, glitch [into Oscar](#), and disappear, or others like Blake's mom, Kali, to say strange things. Some try and figure out the reality of their present predicament. Batman/Bruce Wayne, attempts this, but gets imprisoned. Others realize something is wrong, but are unsure what to do about it.

There is even a sub-theme about the power of privilege. Weiss criticizes her father, Jacques, of the ever-powerful Schnee family, for having a party rather than not repairing the CCT Tower. This bonds Weiss and Batman/Bruce Wayne together, as he says that the wealthy don't care about the plights of other people in any universe.

As would be expected, there [are disagreements](#) between heroes, with Blake and Yang annoyed that the Justice League is trying to tell them what to do, and vice versa. In fact, in a harsh scene which resonates with those who saw Volume 9, Cyborg [asks](#) Ruby who she is and she doesn't know. Although Superman says it is difficult to be a leader, he later questions her as team leader, which does not help her confidence! Even so, when Kilgore declares that Ruby is a child who is trying to be a leader, Superman reassures her, saying leadership isn't about age, but about your heart. He adds that although people will inevitably freeze and fail, that's what makes you human. The latter is a hint at the theme of self-acceptance enshrined throughout *RWBY's* Volume 9.

In the end, Team RWBY, Team JNR, and Justice League [all work together](#), either by examining at holographic maps or tapping into their superpowers/semblances to fight the Grimm and save the day. Their fight is complicated by the fact that these Grimm are not ordinary, but can reboot, until they are electrocuted. This means that Ruby can't use her silver eyes, her ultimate "weapon".

This road to victory is not necessarily a simple one. One theme of *Justice League x RWBY: Super Heroes and Huntsmen, Part 1* is that people lose something which is a part of them. For Vixen, her necklace is missing, and [for Jessica](#), she lost her all-powerful Green

Lantern ring. In the case of the latter, it seems she is having issues tapping into her powers at first.

What stole the show in this film was Juane offering to help her, [showing](#) care, patience, and understanding in the process. Her power is trapped, and she can't access it. Jessica says the ring grounds her, stating it is a symbol of power, belonging, and control. Hence, without it, she feels unmoored and listless, like a ship drifting across the open sea. This reminds me of how Adora felt in the final season of *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*, when she felt completely lost after the Sword of Protection was shattered, and even questioned whether she could help her friends. Coming back to this film, Juane tells her that her ring gets the truth of things and the truth of her, again trying to help her center herself.

At the same time, the film provides subtle hints to [the trauma](#) the characters have experienced in the past. Cyborg says at one point "what, you haven't learned to adapt thanks to childhood trauma?". Canonically, in the Marvel universe, Jessica [experienced](#) trauma herself as a kid. As such, the film's writers [were not above](#) retraumatizing the characters. For example, a person who looks like Pyrrha tricks Juane, and traps him, with Jessica, in a box, while warning them to not warn the Justice League about the reality. Juane is [further](#) affected when the Seer causes him to see Pyrrha's death, [paralyzing him](#).

After Juane had already experienced the death of Pyrrha second-hand (Ruby saw it first-hand), seeing her in front of him caused him to lose all reason, and trust her. This isn't a surprise after all he has been through, so no one can hold it against him. It was good writing to have Juane tell Jessica about Pyrrha and still be able to [help Jessica](#) be more than her fear. In a powerful statement which is often not stated in fiction, he tells her it is fine to have anxiety flare-ups and implies she shouldn't be ashamed of them. All of this helps encourage Jessica to use her green lantern power to help them escape.



*Justice League x RWBY: Super Heroes and Huntsmen, Part 1* hints at the ship-of-sorts between Jessica and Juane, which could be called "Greenknight", overriding any interest Juane had in Vixen, who he seemed taken in by, at first. The film also implies there is [a ship](#) between Batman and Weiss. In fact, Weiss states various times that Batman should stay. This could very well mean that she has romantic feelings for him. Their collaboration is an important part of the film, as both work together at an Atlas' computer lab to learn the reality of the world and why everything is glitching.

Funny enough, Diana is jealous of how close Weiss and Batman are getting. It could be part of the reason she wants to pull him back to "his" world. The writing of Diana, Weiss, and Batman in the film is good. It better than what [some would claim](#), as it is clear that a Batman and Weiss ship, at least in the forms shown in the film, is possible. Otherwise, Weiss and Batman can fight well together, even when faced with impossible odds.

While it is not directly stated, there is [queer subtext](#) between Blake and Yang. In the show proper, both are in a relationship, mutually confessing their romantic feelings in the Volume 9 episode "Confessions Within Cumulonimbus Clouds". [The ship](#) between both, known as Bumbleby, had been semi-canon before that point, but was not canonized until that episode. In the film itself, Yang hugs Blake [happily](#), Blake gives Yang the side-eye when she [describes](#)

Diana "very strong", and Blake [agrees](#) to go along [with Diana](#) to Atlas because she is jealous. Still, Blake puts this aside and fights alongside her against the Grimm while flying.

At other points in *Justice League x RWBY: Super Heroes and Huntsmen, Part 1*, Blake and Yang look at one another, with Blake explaining how she and Yang got to know each other. Furthermore, Yang worries about Blake after she talks about losing people. In a very touching scene in the film, Blake and Yang touch each other's hands through the cockpit window, with Yang saying she [trusts Blake](#), while she pilots the aircraft. In the meantime, Blake puts aside her jealousy so she can fight alongside Diana against the Grimm even as she goes through the air.

Toward the end of the film, after Diana says she knows it is hard to fight under fire, Blake says that it is nice to kiss ass and bumps her ass [with Yang](#). As Yang's voice actor [stated](#) in watch party for the series, "how did anyone ever think Yang was straight". Although it has not been directly confirmed, fans have stated that Yang [is a lesbian](#). Blake was previously confirmed as bisexual. As Shawcross put it, Bumbleby moments were [added](#) because it was something the crew liked and said the moments. He also stated that "Blake and Yang had a lot that they could talk [about] with and relate to with Diana, Wonder Woman". The latter may have been a reference to [past comments](#) by those who say that Wonder Woman is [a bisexual icon](#), later confirmed [by writer Greg Rucka](#).

The last battle of *Justice League x RWBY: Super Heroes and Huntsmen, Part 1*, which involves riding on bikes, and tag-team fighting (like Yang and Blake), is one of the film's strongest. In a hint at what may happen in the second part of the film crossover series, it is clear that a villain named [Kilgore](#), who created a virtual reality by mind-controlling The Flash, is also stuck there. As such, it is implied that someone else is controlling him, although it isn't clear who.

His plan to make the Justice League into teens, when they are "vulnerable", have the world rip them apart, and cause them to deal with emotions they ignore or regress as adults seems like a weak plan. He could have, just as easily, imprisoned them on their own world, instead of Remnant. The hubris [of Kilgore](#) is what takes him down. [Jessica](#) uses the equivalent of Ruby's silver eyes on the Grimm dragon, which has Kilgore inside, causing him to almost fade from existence.

Although everyone says their goodbyes and they all go back to their respective worlds, it is clear this isn't the end. All of the main cast, which are not part of the Justice League, [wake up](#)

from what was supposed to be a training mission. Ruby's concern that someone created the virtual reality/simulation, a person from their world, setting the stage for the next film.

All in all, [animation](#) of *Justice League x RWBY: Super Heroes and Huntsmen, Part 1* is [well-done](#), and the designs are very colorful. There are even features that make it seem like a comic book, such as talk bubbles when characters are annoyed, and other expressions. All of the flowing animation which goes easily with the storytelling, voice acting, and the like, is no surprise as over 210 people, if not more, [worked](#) on this film. That makes it an even bigger effort than a volume of *RWBY*!



Unfortunately, *Justice League x RWBY: Super Heroes and Huntsmen, Part 1* was effectively spoiled [on social media](#) before its release, in part because it accidentally [aired early](#) on Redbox on April 20, five days before its general release. This made animators [ask fans](#) to not post spoilers until the film came out, or say they [feel "pretty hurt"](#) by people posting clips from [the entire](#) film before its release [on April 25th](#). On the positive side, this interest will undoubtedly help support Volume 10 for *RWBY*, so that the show's characters can have their stories continued, even if reported review bombing on IMDB continues.

The film was available on [Google Play](#), but was later taken down for unexplained reasons. Although the stock of Rooster Teeth's parent company (Warner Bros. Discovery) has

been falling, thanks to [the rebranding](#) of HBO streaming platform, and debt [continues](#) to accumulate, the film survived the cuts. That is for the best.

Adding onto what I've said so far about the film, I personally liked the design of characters like Jessica, whether you [consider](#) her gender non-conforming or not, the White Rose [scenes](#) of sorts, Weiss [summoning](#) powerful glyphs, and it is [a lot](#) of fun. Perhaps, there will be future *RWBY* features in the future which are not crossovers.

In certain ways, this film made me think of [Sword Art Online Progressive: Scherzo of Deep Night](#), which I reviewed earlier this year, as it is also set in a virtual reality. In this film, the characters are forced into a virtual reality, while in *Sword Art Online Progressive: Scherzo of Deep Night*, I believe they chose to be in that reality.

Hopefully, in the [second part of film crossover series](#), *Justice League x RWBY: Super Heroes and Huntsmen, Part Two*, which may come out in the summer, there is more character exploration of Superman, Batman, Diana, and Vixen. This film focused on the internal struggles of Jessica more than the other Justice League members. It would be great to see a focus on the mental struggles of the other Justice League members as well. I would not be surprised if there are additional scenes with [ships](#) such as Bumbleby, Greenknight, and Weiss/Batman, since this film set the groundwork for the next one.

As a final note, although David Levy, who has long worked on *RWBY*, and on series such as *Red vs. Blue*, *Camp Camp*, various bands, and independent films, does a decent job with the film's music, it isn't that memorable. Maybe Casey Lee Williams could either compose the music score of the next film, or at least a few tracks. That would ensure that the film packed an extra punch.

*Justice League x RWBY: Super Heroes and Huntsmen, Part 1* can be purchased or rented on Prime Video, MoviesAnywhere, [iTunes/Apples TV+](#), Redbox, and Vudu, or have the DVD and Blu-ray ordered from [other](#) online marketplaces.

Animation	★★★★★
Voice Acting	★★★★★
Music	★★★★☆
Story	★★★★☆
<div>4.5</div> <div>★★★★☆</div>	

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## Chapter 3: RWBY Volume 9 Spoiler-Filled Review



*RWBY* is an anime-inspired science fantasy action-adventure series, using computer animation, which has run for eight seasons, known as "volumes". Originally created by animator and writer Monty Oum, in 2013, and continued after his death in 2015, *RWBY* is the flagship series of Rooster Teeth, a digital media company and subdivision of Warner Bros. Discovery. As a warning, this review will discuss death, suicide, blood, torture, animal death, physical (and emotional) abuse, and other related themes.

This young adult animated series primarily centers on the four primary protagonists: Ruby Rose, Weiss Schnee, Blake Belladonna, and Yang Xiao Long, with the series name deriving from their forenames. Set in a fictional world named Remnant, these characters, and others, train to become warriors (huntresses or huntsmen), so they can save the world from monsters known as Grimm, which are driven by fear and dedicated to destroying humanity.

Apart from the aforementioned protagonists, others, such as Ozma/Ozpin/Oscar Pine, Lie Ren, Nora Valkyrie, Qrow Branwen, Robyn Hill, and Jaune Arc, help them fight against evil forces. Uniquely, the series has theme songs, primarily by Casey Lee Williams, at the beginning of each volume, which foreshadows what will happen, making the show unique.

The show's ninth volume is unlike [the previous volumes](#), which had a classic conflict between good vs. evil, intricate storytelling, horror elements, and character development. That is

because the protagonists are stranded in a magical land known as the Ever After. Even so, they retain a semblance which allows them to have superpowers-of-sorts, so they can either manipulate objects, disorient people, use super strength, or have other abilities.

Morally grey characters are inherent to *RWBY*, including the Ace Ops or General James Ironwood. In contrast, Cinder Fall breaks from the strict dictates of her leader, Salem. The latter, and her enforcers, are determined to do anything to achieve their goals, even engaging in human experimentation. This interlinks with the blood, gore, and death of some characters.

The series' large focus on sci-fi and magic elements goes beyond characters like Penny Polendina (voiced by Taylor "Pelt" McNee), a cyborg girl, and scrolls which record and receive messages. Arguably, in this volume, the series has received a "[directional reset](#)" and ended on a strong note, even setting up a possible volume 10.

One of the most controversial parts of *RWBY*, up to the [current volume](#), has been its LGBTQ representation. There have been lesbian couples, like Saphron and Terra-Arc, and lesbian characters who have crushes on the protagonists, as is the case for Ilia Amitola (voiced by Cherami Leigh). This was strengthened by the role of May Marigold, the first trans character in the series, in Volume 8. She was voiced by trans female voice actress, Kdin Jenzen. She did not appear in Volume 9 and Jenzen has been critical of the company's practices. This volume is the [last one](#) that Jenzen will be working on, as she was reportedly laid off from the company.

Some fans have held out hope that the Bumbleby ship (Blake and Yang) would become canon, especially after Arryn Zech, Blake's voice actress, confirmed her character as bisexual [in May 2020](#). This came to pass in this volume and there have been hints of other possible romantic ships, which I'll discuss later in this review.

One of the strengths of this series is its visuals, which have improved dramatically [from the first volume](#), and its voice actors. Furthermore, although the fandom of this series can be toxic, the show's fans have come up with colorful ship names. This includes femslash ones, such as [Baked Alaska](#) (Yang and Neopolitan), Blood Mint (Ruby and Emerald Sustrai), [Freezerburn](#) (Yang and Weiss), Ladybug (Ruby and Blake), and White Rose (Ruby and Weiss), even though some of these are problematic.



The surreal nature of *RWBY*'s ninth volume makes it fundamentally different from the [canon-adjacent](#) anime series, *RWBY: Ice Queendom*. The latter focused on Weiss Schnee, especially on [how she needs](#) to "unlearn her white supremacist thinking" and become a better person. There was a non-binary character named Shion Zaiden (voiced by Hiroki Nanami, and Jenzen in English). It was confirmed [in an interview](#) with the show's staff and producers. Unfortunately, similar characters have yet to appear in *RWBY*, even though both series share fight scenes, strong visuals, and soundtrack.

*RWBY* is somewhat complicated by issues that Rooster Teeth has dealt with over the years. For one, actor Vic Mignogna, who voiced Qrow Branwen until Volume 6, [was removed](#) after accusations of sexual harassment. Ryan Haywood and Adam Kovic were either [involved](#) in scandals which related to their leaked nude photographs or grooming underage fans, in the case [of Haywood](#). Furthermore, anonymous reviews [focused](#) on a negative crunch culture at Rooster Teeth, especially at their animation division, [leading](#) to the resignation of Gray Haddock (creator [of gen:LOCK](#)), head of this division, as a result.

Former hosts of Rooster Teeth programs stated that they received racist and sexist abuse [from the audience](#). Jenzen [argued](#) that an upper manager engaged in transphobic and homophobic abuse. This was followed by [other employees](#) posting similar stories. In response, the company released statements arguing they were taking steps [to improve](#) the work culture,

review pay parity, and even replace the entire Human Resources department, while reducing the number of shows [being produced](#). These issues were compounded by the arrest of then-vice president of Rooster Teeth, Michael Quinn, for [assaulting his wife](#), in November 2019.

In terms of *RWBY* itself, fans previously claimed that the show queerbaited after the death of a character in the show's seventh season, believing that Qrow Brawnen and Clover Ebi were canon. In reality, the series never directly showed them together. The argument that Clover's death is queerbaiting, is [like saying](#) *Wednesday* did the same by not making the friendship between Wednesday Addams and Enid Sinclair a romantic one, despite the false insistence of fans that it was canon. As such, it is no surprise that some see *RWBY* as a lost cause and not worth supporting.

From my perspective, I think that regardless of [these issues](#), and the fact that Rooster Teeth seems to be a toxic work environment, *RWBY* still has value. This is because of the hard work of the animators and writers, known [as CRWBY](#). In fact, I would argue that the latest volume is the strongest in the series up to this point and it has some of the best animation. Although some may balk at the show's style, or even claim that the protagonist's clothing constitutes fan service for the audience, the reality is that the show's style makes it stand out, apart from any other action-adventure science fantasy.

Unlike previous volumes, the ninth volume [premiered](#) on Crunchyroll [on February 18](#), as part of "a one-year exclusive release with Crunchyroll", and it will then release on the Rooster Teeth website in 2024. This is a big deal because [the series](#) is primary show for Rooster Teeth and its streaming platform of the same name. So, it may portend the end or reduction of the platform.

Whether the worst [for Rooster Teeth](#) comes to a head, I'm not sure. It seems very likely that the show will receive a tenth volume, which may be the final season. I would be very surprised if *RWBY* is not renewed, as it has generated a lot of buzz, has generally strong ratings on Crunchyroll, and, undoubtedly, has thousands of people watching each episode.



The ninth volume of *RWBY* is captivating. Ruby, Weiss, Blake, and Yang try and find themselves, and anything they have lost. There are new characters like a talking mouse named Little (voiced by Luci Christian), the Curious Cat (voiced by Robbie Daymond), which fulfills a specific role in a land which has many characteristics of *Alice in Wonderland*, and enemies such as the jabberwalkers (voiced by Richard Norman). Little later becomes Ruby's emotional support animal of sorts.

I was further drawn into this volume by the story of Alyx, her brother [Lewis](#), the Rusted Knight, and the Curious Cat. This was weaved together artfully, with the audience knowing as much as the characters about the real story as the series went forward. This included the revelation that [Juane](#) became the Rusted Knight and was reportedly betrayed by Alyx (voiced by Shara Kirby). He became trapped in the Ever After for over 40 years, causing him to become a "mature" older man, who has a steed named Juniper.

The volume interrogates Juane's hero complex. It breaks down when the town of [the Paper Pleasers](#) is flooded (possibly mirroring what happened to Mantle [in Volume 8](#)) and he can save [none](#) of them. He admits as much in the seventh episode, saying he "not ok" or "right". In some ways I see a parallel between Juane (voiced by Miles Luna) and General Ironwood (voiced by Jason Rose). Juane seems to be just as tired and angry at people, thinking he is "saving"

people by making "hard choices". Ironwood is different because he became an unhinged military dictator which turned against the protagonists.

Even more than any previous volume, this 10-episode volume of *RWBY* has a specific focus on Ruby. She begins a downward spiral, although her sister, Yang, repeatedly tries to ask her what is wrong, often to no avail. Understandably, she is further shaken when her friends are shrunk to miniature size. She begins to have so much self-doubt that she isn't sure is a huntress/hero anymore.

This volume shows the extreme pressure Ruby is under as team leader, as she puts the needs of others ahead of her own. This is shown directly when she can't even use her weapon, Crescent Rose, in the show's seventh episode, after having flashbacks to traumatic events from the previous volumes. This is almost akin to the *Steven Universe Future* episode where Steven Universe tells his friend's mother about all the childhood trauma that he has experienced over his lifetime.

Getting back to *RWBY*, at the end of episode seven, Ruby has a breakdown, asking why she has to be the leader. She criticizes everyone else for not devoting time to solving her problems, for helping Juane's "make-believe" friends, and seeming to disregard what she is going through. I thought it was interesting that none her teammates push her over the edge, but Juane, who has experienced as much trauma as her, ends up [blaming her](#) for everything that went wrong.

Although Juane has a valid point, it is wrong of him to put the blame on her entirely. In addition, Ruby's plan in Volume 8, to use the staff of creation to create paths to evacuate citizens from Mantle to Vacuo, clearly opened them up to a lot of danger. But its failure wasn't entirely her fault. If Cinder hadn't asked about Ruby's plan, thanks to magic lamp, it might have been successful. Even so, they seemed to ignore the advice from the genie, in the staff of creation, who told them to "not fall".

This reality mattered little to Ruby, who felt overwhelmed by everything, and fled, shocking the rest of her team. Having Ruby snap at her team in the ways she did was inevitable based on what had happened through the previous seasons. In fact, she was already under a lot of stress by the end of Volume 8 and almost lost her life multiple times over.

In watching this volume, I am reminded of the mental health struggles of Steven in *Steven Universe Future* and *Steven Universe*, and Julian Chase in the [ever-](#)

[problematic gen:LOCK](#). However, it is different for Ruby. In the eighth episode, she pushes away Little and faces Neopolitan, a mute villain-of-sorts in a mansion, with Neo [bringing](#) back ghosts of Ruby's past [to torture](#) her. Through Roman Torchwick, Neo "[says](#)" that she will enjoy seeing Ruby break down.

At the end of the same episode, drinks a cup of tea, poured by Neo, with a leaf from the ever-powerful tree. She appears to end her own life, staring into the eyes of her sister, Yang, and feels that the world would be better without her. As this happens, her teammates remain [in shock](#) over what she did.



This serious tone of *RWBY* is only part of the show's mature, and [distressing themes](#). It is coupled with death, loss, destruction, and horrific creatures such as the Grimm, which are attracted to those who are afraid or scared. Although such beings don't appear in this volume, the above scene is [followed](#) by the Curious Cat possessing Neo for his own ends. The devious cat sees Neo as an "empty host", and the cat-as-Neo is a being which Weiss, Blake, Yang, and Jaune fight in the last two episodes of this volume.

How *RWBY* depicts suicide is fundamentally different from how it is depicted in the continually controversial *gen:LOCK*. The latter featured all the characters killing themselves, then each becoming the equivalent of a swarm of locusts to defeat the enemy. In the case [of](#)

[Ruby](#), there are questions as to whether she [ended her own life](#), or if she only engaged a suicide attempt.

The final nail of Ruby's descent into a dark place, Neo, is more than a villain. She is not completely heartless, even though she [terrorized](#) Ruby into the drinking the tea and [killed](#) Little with a twist of her heeled shoe. By the end of the volume, it is [clear](#) that she may have some form of redemption or will become an ally-of-sorts to the show's heroes. Ruby even says that Neo will find herself, one way or another, as she falls back into the Ever After.

In terms of the tonal shifts in this volume of *RWBY*, they were not as well-executed as they could have been. At the same time, it should be remembered that a lot has happened in a short period of time, leaving Weiss, Blake, and Yang, especially after Ruby "ascends", without much time to process to process everything. Furthermore, it would be [inaccurate](#) to say that Ruby's teammates don't care about her, as they [clearly do](#), in more ways [than one](#).

The volume was effective in connecting the previous volumes to this one, with an emphasis on the themes of self-acceptance and [self-love](#). Ruby exemplifies this directly. She isn't sure what choice she wants to make, even as those [outside the tree](#), like Yang, Weiss, and Blake, accept whatever path Ruby wants to go down. At one point, Ruby thinks she might be doing more harm than good, looks at all of the possibilities in front of her, and grabs [her mom's weapon](#). In the end, she [embraces](#) herself. This isn't as much change as some had been expecting, but it is a powerful message that you are enough, without a need to remake yourself.

The ever-present tree in this volume is shown to be a place of rebirth and rejuvenation, which does not simply resurrect and kill someone. Instead, ascension isn't death, but [it is change](#), and that is the role of the tree. This is connected with [the theme](#) of this volume that you should not condemn yourself for mistakes you make, but accept them and learn from them. In fact, when the Curious Cat, which is vulnerable after the tree's leaves released him from Neo's body, argues that humans are weak, confused, incomplete, and break everything they touch, Weiss, Yang, and Blake disagree, saying Ruby is none of those things.

The volume nine finale of *RWBY* was one of the best episodes, giving background, but tying up loose ends, even talking about how the Ever After was created. It brought together the aforementioned themes and it ends with the characters walking through the portal to a place they are needed most: Vacuo. It was a fitting end to the series if this is the last episode ever produced.



There is more about of *RWBY*'s ninth volume, especially when it comes to LGBTQ representation, which put it on the map when it comes to all the representation in series this year. Episode 6, entitled "Confessions Within Cumulonimbus Clouds", was written by [Eddy Rivas](#), and directed by [Kerry Shawcross](#) and [Yssa Badiola](#). The latter was known for her short-lived series, [Recorded by Arizal](#).

This episode built upon previous interactions between Yang and Blake, with flirting or blushing at one another in this volume, and in [previous volumes](#). Everyone is trapped in a Punderstorm, a literal and metaphorical crossroads, with individuals only able to get out if they either solve the problems or wait until the storm passes.

In one of the best-constructed and well-done queer romantic [scenes](#) I've seen in an animated series, Blake and Yang admit their feelings for each other, as [the music](#) swells, then kiss. Significantly, the characters almost express the feelings of the fandom, with Weiss and Ruby surprised to see them [linking lips](#), while Juane says that it "feels like I've been waiting forever for that". It is something which many fans of the Bumbleby ship had been waiting for.

While the scene was hinted in the [volume 9 poster](#), it was no substitute for the scene, which [excited](#) fans over the [canonization](#) of Bumbleby, including on the show's subreddit. Even the Bumbleby subreddit was exploding with new content. It could be said that the episode set [a high standard](#) for women-love-women romance.

It is only rivaled by the developing yuri story within the recently ended yuri isekai [The Magical Revolution of the Reincarnated Princess and the Genius Young Lady](#), or the queer romance encapsulated within *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*, [Dead End: Paranormal Park](#), [Arcane](#), [Star Trek: Lower Decks](#), [Helluva Boss](#), [Craig of the Creek](#), *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts*, and *Steven Universe* to name a few recent series with prominent representation.

The episode itself [generated discussion](#) from the show's roundtable and even on *All Good and No Worries*, a Rooster Teeth show hosted by Barbara Dunkleman (voice of Yang), in an episode in which she [talked with Arryn Zech](#) (voice of Blake). In previous years, Zech and Dunkleman often hinted at this ship, [stating](#) their support for the ship, as did actor Kara Eberle (who voices Weiss).

The life of Zech somewhat mirrored her character, as she [accused](#) her ex-boyfriend, prominent actor Bob Morley, of verbal and emotional abuse, and said that Morley was [furious](#) when he learned that she was bisexual. Blake had been with an abusive ex-boyfriend of her own named Adam Taurus, who wields a chokutō and a gun. He attempts to take over the White Fang, peaceful organization originally aimed at improving conditions for the Faunus, a group of people with animal traits.

In the penultimate season six episode, "Seeing Red", Blake and Yang kill Adam together, and touch their foreheads, which some see as a sign of romantic affection. Blake is also [a bisexual character](#), like Zech is real life. In addition, during the discussion with Zech, Dunkleman admitted she is "not fully straight", but is "for the most part...fairly straight", while Zech talked about the struggles of dating as a bisexual woman.

It is clear that the romantic relationship [between](#) Blake and Yang [was](#) always [planned](#), despite [brutal shipping wars](#) claiming otherwise. The [canon nature](#) of Bumbleby [flies against](#) those claiming the show's crew was queerbaiting. In fact, some made similar claims about the slow build-up of the romance between Marceline the Vampire Queen and Princess Bubblegum in *Adventure Time*, whose relationship, known [as Bubbline](#) by fans, was canonized in the series finale "Come Along with Me". It is not known if CRWBY would ever produce an hour-long episode about Bumbleby, akin to the *Adventure Time: Distant Lands* episode "Obsidian", which almost exclusively focused on Bubbline. It would be great if that occurred.

The episode six scene was reinforced in [other episodes](#): Blake and Yang fight together in [tag team style](#), Yang protects Blake [at one point](#), or Ruby sarcastically says she is "happy" for

Blake and Yang getting their "feelings sorted out" when she has her breakdown at the end of episode seven. More powerfully, in the [final episode](#), Blake and Yang walk through the portal door back to Vacuo holding hands [just like](#) Korra and Asami Sato in the *Legend of Korra* series finale.



Blake and Yang are not alone. There are various indications what Weiss may have a crush on Juane, in [a ship](#) known as Whiteknight, with Weiss laughing when Juane is surprised by his own voice in the final episode. In addition, some fans saw hints of romantic themes between Weiss and Rose, known as [White Rose](#). Others claimed there was [confirmation](#) that Nuts and Dolts, the [ship name](#) of Penny Poledina and Ruby, is canon. As the Blacksmith/Tree (voiced by Kimlinh Tran) says in the final episode, real balance comes from love and patience to see things through. That is the case for any of these [ships](#).

As it turns out, not only is Zech openly bisexual, as noted earlier, as [mentioned](#) at various conventions over the years, but so is Lindsay Jones, who voices Ruby, as she [stated in July 2018](#). Additionally, Tran, who is of Vietnamese descent, identifies as non-binary, asexual, and as [a demigirl](#). Otherwise, it was a bit funny to witness those on social media shipping Summer Rose (mother of Ruby) and Raven Brawnwen (mother of Yang), known as Rosebird, after a scene of them together in the final episode. Some even believed that both characters were in a romantic relationship at some point.

All in all, the story of *RWBY* Volume 9 could have been significantly [improved](#) if the volume had at least four more episodes, the length of Volume 8. Even so, the average run-time of the episodes was only slightly less than those in the previous volume. Possibly due to budgeting, many of the episodes seemed relatively short. Even worse, they have no subtitles because Crunchyroll incorrectly described them as "dubbed". Hopefully the latter will be fixed soon, and subtitles will be added. On the other hand, the show's music remained strong thanks to the [talents](#) of vocalist and songwriter [Casey Lee Williams](#), and others such as Martin Gonzalez.

Williams' [music](#), and that of [others](#), meshes well with the show's emphasis on horror. This includes terrifying creatures, actions of Neo, or the antics of the Curious Cat, when he turns on them, takes over Neo for its own ends, and [is murdered](#) in the final episode.

There are many possible avenues for *RWBY* Volume 10, which seems somewhat [confirmed](#). If the volume does come to pass, there will be the return of those who never used the pathways to Vacuo, or fell into the Ever After. This includes Winter, Ren, Oscar, Salem, Cinder, Qrow, Robin, and some of the Ace Ops. As such, there will undoubtedly be [reunions](#) between the characters the volume, which may be the [final volume](#) of *RWBY* as a whole.

Although *RWBY* is not perfect, and could be improved, including with the addition of more Black and Brown characters, it [stands out](#) as a strong series for young adults. It comes at a time that many series, especially those produced and aired on Disney channels, are produced to entertain children. Hopefully, other mature animations such as *Arcane*, *Invincible*, [Helluva Boss](#), and *Hazbin Hotel*, to name four prominent series, fill the void left after the end of *RWBY*'s ninth volume.

The series will not be in a hiatus as *Justice League x RWBY: Super Heroes and Huntsmen, Part 1* will be available on various platforms after April 25th. It will be followed by a second part this summer. I look forward to watching both films and highly recommend *RWBY* for the reasons mentioned in this review.

The ninth volume of *RWBY* is streaming on Crunchyroll, while previous seasons are on Rooster Teeth and Crunchyroll, and are available for purchase or rent on YouTube Movies.

Animation	★★★★★
Voice Acting	★★★★★
Music	★★★★★
Story	★★★★★
<div>5</div> <div>★★★★★</div>	

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## Concluding Words

After reading through this e-book, I realized how much I have written about *RWBY*. I mentioned in posts about [indie animation](#), briefly in reviews (of [Helluva Boss](#), [Star Trek: Lower Decks](#), [The Owl House](#), [The Great Jahy](#), [Arcane](#), [Velma](#), [Moon Girl and Devil Dinosaur](#), [Otaku Elf](#), [Kuma Kuma Kuma Bear](#), and [Skip and Loafer](#)), described a bit in [my post](#) about LGBTQ+ representation in animation in 2020 and again in my post [for 2021](#), and my webcomic [roundup](#) for Disability Month. This is only scratching the surface, however.

I also [compared](#) Blake to Yuko in *The Demon Girl Next Door*, writing “Yuko has the ability to enter other people's minds....She is also very expressive, with her demon tail telling as much about her emotions as the cat ears of Blake Belladonna in *RWBY*...say about what she is thinking from minute to minute.” In addition, [I stated](#) that *RWBY* does a better job at character development than *Ippon Again!* If this wasn't enough, I compared Eve in *Birdie Wing* to Yang Xiao Long, [saying](#) she is a “badass huntress...[who] can go super saiyan if she wants and is deeply in love with catgirl Blake Belladonna.” Recently, I compared the suicide attempt of a character in *Oshi no Ko* to *RWBY*, [writing](#) that in “Volume 9 of *RWBY*, the subject [of suicide] is treated more respectfully [than in *gen:LOCK*]. One of the protagonists, Ruby Rose, either engaged in a suicide attempt, or ended her life. It appears to be the former rather than the latter.”

Otherwise, I mentioned the *Justice League x RWBY: Super Heroes and Huntsmen, Part 1* film in two other posts. First was [my review of Gods' School](#), where I noted that “Unlike other series based in Greek mythology, the characters in this series are all teenagers, and in a school environment like that *Ever After High*, except it is not as glitzy.” Second was [my review of Unicorn: Warriors Eternal](#). In that post, I noted that the villain in that series shared more characteristics with Kilgore, stating that he “aimed to change the Justice League into teenagers, so they are “vulnerable”, are ripped apart by the world, and have to deal with emotions they ignore or regress as adults,” a similar motive of the villain in *Unicorn: Warriors Eternal*.

I am also planning to review *Justice League x RWBY: Super Heroes and Huntsmen, Part 2* which comes out on October 31 of this year. I will also mention the series in my “From Yuri to Beyond: LGBTQ Representation in Animation in 2023” post.

- Burkely

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